

Message Text

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DRAFTED BY ARA/ECA:ROBERT W. ZIMMERMANN:JLP

APPROVED BY ARA:FRANCIS N. MCNEIL
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TO AMEMBASSY ASUNCION IMMEDIATE

C O N F I D E N T I A L STATE 020752

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: SHUM, PA

SUBJECT: DISCUSSION OF U.S. HUMAN RIGHTS POLICY WITH PARA-
GUAYAN OFFICIALS, JANUARY 18, 1978

1. DURING WASHINGTON VISIT OF PARAGUAYAN DELEGATION WHICH INCLUDED ROMEO ACOSTA, PRESIDENT OF CENTRAL BANK; OSCAR OBELAR, SECRETARY OF FINANCE MINISTRY; JUAN PETTENGIL, DIRECTOR ROAD TRANSPORTATION, MINISTRY OF PUBLIC WORKS; AND VELAZU:Z ESCOBAR, COLORADO DEPUTY, AMBASSADOR LOPEZ ESCOBAR ORGANIZED DINNER TO WHICH HE INVITED MCNEIL AND ZIMMERMANN SO THAT VISITORS COULD BE EXPOSED DIRECTLY TO DIRECTION AND FORCE OF U.S. HUMAN RIGHTS POLICY CONSIDERATIONS. AMBASSADOR SAID HE WISHED U.S. SIDE TO BE COMPLETELY FRANK AS HE FREQUENTLY FELT HE WAS "IN THE MIDDLE OF THE SANDWICH" AND IT WOULD HELP HIS CREDIBILITY.

2. LOPEZ ESCOBAR WAS TAKEN AT HIS WORD. U.S. HUMAN RIGHTS POLICY AS IT AFFECTS VOTES IN IFIS AND THE DIRECT LINKAGE OF OUR ACTIONS ON NON-NEEDY LOANS PLUS THE EARLY NEED TO SET A DATE FOR AN IAHRG VISIT WAS SET FORTH PO-
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LITELY BUT BLUNTLY. AT TIMES THE DISCUSSION GOT WARM. PETTENGIL REALLY DID NOT WANT TO HEAR U.S. POSITION AND COLORADO DEPUTY RESORTED TO POLITICAL SPEECHES THAT WOULD

HAVE BEEN MUSIC TO STROESSNER'S EARS. U.S. WAS CHARGED WITH "AGGRESSION" AND INTERFERENCE IN INTERNAL AFFAIRS. WHAT CAME THROUGH CLEARLY, HOWEVER, WAS THEIR SENSITI-

VITY TO A DENIAL OF THE LOAN FOR CONTINUATION OF PET PROJECT OF TRANS-CHACO ROAD. PARAGUAYANS WERE SPECIFICALLY TOLD THAT AS MATTERS NOW STAND, IT IS EXTREMELY UNLIKELY THAT WE COULD VOTE FOR TRANS-CHACO. LOAN FOR ELECTRIC TRANSMISSION LINES WAS TOUCHED UPON BRIEFLY AS ANOTHER IMPORTANT LOAN, BUT NOT DISCUSSED FURTHER. ROMEO ACOSTA SEEMED SOMEWHAT TAKEN ABACK, OCCASIONALLY TOSSED IN QUESTION BUT SAID LITTLE IN FRONT OF THE OTHERS.

3. SUBSEQUENTLY, MCNEIL REITERATED OUR VIEW IN PRIVATE FOR ROMEO ACOSTA THAT PRESIDENTIAL COMMITMENTS WERE TO BE TAKEN SERIOUSLY. ROMEO ACOSTA CLAIMED STROESSNER HAD NOT COMMITTED HIMSELF TO IAHRC VISIT IN FIRST QUARTER BUT WOULD SET A DATE AFTER ELECTIONS. MCNEIL TOLD HIM THIS WAS NOT OUR UNDERSTANDING AND THIS DIFFERENCE WAS A SERIOUS ONE. ROMEO ACOSTA CONFESSED THAT NO ONE LIKED TO TAKE BAD NEWS TO STROESSNER AND SAID HE WOULD DISCUSS IT WITH YOU AND FOREIGN MINISTER NOGUES.

4. NET EFFECT OF THIS EXCHANGE IS DIFFICULT TO EVALUATE. PRESENTATION OF U.S. POLICY COULD NOT HAVE BEEN CLEARER BUT LOPEZ ESCOBAR TOLD US LATER THAT ON HIS DEPARTURE, ROMEO ACOSTA BLANDLY TOLD THE AMBASSADOR HE THOUGHT MATTERS WOULD WORK OUT SATISFACTORILY WITH A LITTLE PATIENCE. IT IS DIFFICULT TO IMAGINE ANY OF THE VISITORS TAKING BACK THE STRAIGHT STORY TO STROESSNER.
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5. WITH REFERENCE TO LOPEZ ESCOBAR'S FEELING THAT HE IS IN THE MIDDLE, IT IS OF SOME INTEREST TO NOTE THAT HE CLAIMS TO HAVE CHIDED NOGUES RECENTLY FOR NOT HAVING BEEN OPEN AND DIRECT IN HIS CONVERSATIONS IN WASHINGTON LAST SEPTEMBER. SPECIFICALLY HE CLAIMS TO HAVE CALLED NOGUES' ATTENTION TO FACT LATTER ACTED AS THOUGH EVERYTHING WAS A BED OF ROSES IN CONVERSATION WITH DEPUTY SECRETARY CHRISTOPHER, BUT LATER SCREAMED ON TELEPHONE REGARDING U.S. "INTERVENTION" IN ASKING ABOUT RECENT LABOR ARRESTS (YPACARAI INCIDENT).

6. AS REQUESTED, OBELAR WAS THANKED FOR HIS VALUABLE ASSISTANCE IN BRIEFING U.S. VISITORS. VANCE

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